

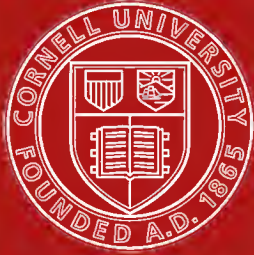
OLIN

BM

90

.J589

S28z



Cornell University  
Library

The original of this book is in  
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in  
the United States on the use of the text.

<http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924075707152>

# SOLOMON SCHECHTER

## *A Biographical Sketch*

BY  
CYRUS ADLER



Reprinted from  
THE AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK  
5677





# SOLOMON SCHECHTER

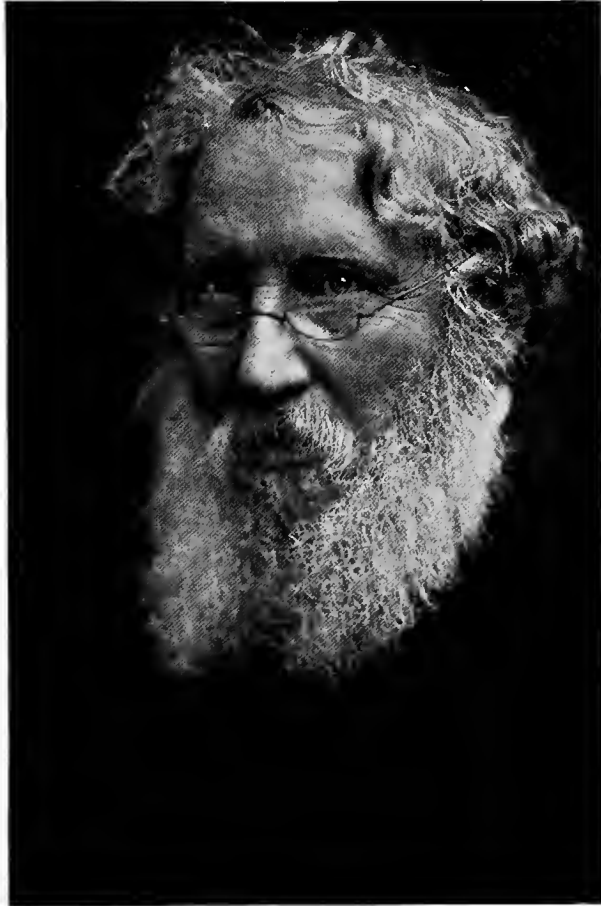
## *A Biographical Sketch*

BY  
CYRUS ADLER



Reprinted from  
THE AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK  
5677





(C) Mandelkern

*J. Scherster*





SOLOMON SCHECHTER  
A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BY CYRUS ADLER

SOLOMON SCHECHTER, president of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, founder of the United Synagogue of America, Master of Arts and Doctor of Letters of the University of Cambridge in England, Doctor of Letters of Harvard University, sometime reader in Rabbinics at Cambridge, and professor of Hebrew at the University College, London, who made distinguished contributions to all departments of Jewish literature, and was the foremost exponent of Judaism in his time, entered upon his eternal reward on November 19, 1915.

He was born, with a twin brother, to Isaac and Chaya Rachel Schechter in the Roumanian town Focșani or Focshan, probably on December 7, 1850, and was one of a large family of especially fine physique and handsome appearance. Focshan is the capital of the department of Putna in Roumania which formed the ancient frontier of the former principalities of Moldavia and Walachia. It had a population of about twenty-four thousand souls, of whom some six thousand were Jews. The community goes back to an ancient period, among its celebrities being Nathan Noté Hannover, rabbi of the place at the beginning of the seventeenth century and author of a work, *Yewen Mesulah*, which gave an account of the persecutions of the Jews of his time. There does not appear to have been in Focshan what might be called an institution of higher learning. There were no lectures, no libraries, none of the

wealth of aids and apparatus which a student even then could have found in the capitals of Europe, and which are now accessible to students everywhere.

Doctor Schechter received his education from his father, who belonged to the Hasidic sect and was a man at once of scholarly mould and saintly character. The boy had learned to read Hebrew at the age of three, and at five he had been initiated into the Pentateuch. In the Jewish community European literature was unknown. He used frequently to tell how his initial inkling of geography was derived from the *Sefer Haberith* and the letters of Hag Vidaver in the Hebrew weekly *ha-Magid* in which he first read the name America. He was deprived of dictionaries, grammars, and concordances, those great labor-saving devices. But there were in this Roumanian town, whose Jewish population may have gone back many hundreds of years, possibly even to the time of the Khazars, whose history Doctor Schechter in later years so illuminated, copies of the great standard works of Hebrew literature—the Bible, the Talmud, and the Midrash—, although it is certain that they were not represented either in the first or the best editions.

At the age of ten he was sent to the Yeshibah at Piatra, an ancient town which boasted a considerable monastic library, but could hardly have possessed a collection of rabbinical literature.

After he had passed his thirteenth year, he was sent to Rabbi Joseph Saul Nathanson of Lemberg, a great Talmudist and a voluminous author, from whom he received a highly complimentary testimonial for his zeal and his originality. In fact it seems evident from the meagre information at disposal that as a boy he evinced an indomitable determination

to master the contents of the greatest of Jewish classics. It may be that the remarkable knowledge of Jewish literature which Doctor Schechter attained, the readiness with which he could unerringly turn to a passage, and the facility with which he could recognize from a few lines of a single scrap of manuscript its relationship to some great lost work, were due to the fact that his early education was perforce confined to Jewish literature and to the very absence of those aids to memory with which our modern systems of teaching are probably undermining one of the most important faculties of the human mind.

Be that as it may, the cravings of the student and the restlessness of the man drove him from the small town. In 1875 he repaired to Vienna, where he first came in contact with an orderly modern system of education, and was a regular student at the Beth ha-Midrash. Here he enjoyed the friendship of the great preacher Adolph Jellinek, and he especially came under the influence of Isaac Hirsch Weiss and Lector Meir Friedmann. Of the latter Doctor Schechter said in a charming sketch that great as he was as a scholar, he was even greater as a Jew and as a man. "What I owe him personally," wrote Doctor Schechter, "concerns the world very little, nor have I words at my command to express adequately what he meant to me as a teacher and friend for nearly forty years." And this was not merely a postmortem sentiment, because I very well remember that at my first meeting with Doctor Schechter in November, 1890, upon learning that it was my intention to go to Vienna, he insisted that the one person whom I ought to visit was Lector Meir Friedmann, and he provided me with an introduction which at once proved a passport to Friedmann's home. To him Doctor Schechter dedicated his

*Saadyana*, published in 1903, in these words: "To my Master, Lector M. Friedmann of Vienna, this volume is dedicated in gratitude and admiration." Friedmann entrusted to Schechter the instruction of his own sons, and from him Schechter acquired that deep interest in the Midrash which afterwards resulted in most fruitful studies. It is easy to understand how a man like Friedmann should have exercised a potent influence over the young scholar, for combined with vast erudition, scientific method, and saintliness of character there was in him a strong human strain not unlike that which exhibited itself in Schechter's own character. On the Sabbath afternoon, when the young men would come to Friedmann's house, he would brush aside even the preoccupations of Jewish literature and the study of the Torah, and over a cup of coffee say to them: "Come, my young friends, let us have a little gossip" (*lashon ha-rah*). It was from Weiss, however, that he received, in 1879, the rabbinical diploma, whose functions he scrupulously refrained from exercising.

He then went to Berlin, where he continued to enjoy the friendship of Doctor Pinkus Friedrich Frankl previously formed in Vienna. Frankl, who was a distinguished editor, associated with the great historian Graetz, and an author whose contributions covered the whole field of Jewish literature, had succeeded Abraham Geiger as rabbi at Berlin.

Here, too, Schechter came in contact with all the distinguished scholars of the city, especially with Israel Lewy and Moritz Steinschneider. Lewy's studies covered the fields of the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Midrash, and indicated the possession of an acute and dispassionate critical spirit which Schechter followed in his first important work, *Aboth di R. Nathan*.

He was vastly impressed with the great range of Steinschneider's knowledge and literary activity, and, while in later years he criticized the lack of an historical perspective exhibited by him and his school, he commended his important liturgical studies, the contributions which he made indicating the part that Jewish scholars played in the world of science at large, and the absolute objectivity and impartiality of his bibliographical work, though he remarked in passing that "you cannot, with all the sympathy in the world, alter or interpret a single date in favor of a given theory or of a popular person."

In 1882 Claude G. Montefiore, then a promising young student, wished to continue, upon his return to England, the studies which he had so favorably begun in Berlin, and it was upon the recommendation of Frankl that Montefiore invited Schechter to come to England and act as his preceptor. The impressions of these early days in England have been chronicled for us by two faithful narrators. Joseph Jacobs, a distinguished and versatile scholar, before his untimely death in January, 1916, wrote this charming picture of his first impressions of Schechter in England:

"It was at this period, when he settled in England, at the persuasion of Mr. Montefiore, that I first became acquainted with Schechter, and indeed for a time inducted him into the mysteries of the English language. When in later years I laughingly claimed credit for his incisive English style, he would retort that he had simultaneously attempted to teach me Rabbinics, yet repudiated any responsibility for my Rabbinical ignorance. It is impossible to convey any adequate idea of the genial radiance and *elan* of Schechter's personality at this period. At the height of his physical and mental vigor, appreciated for the first time at his true value, sur-

rounded by an ever-increasing circle of admiring friends, he burst upon us as a blazing comet in the intellectual sky. There used to be a gathering of friends in London who called themselves 'The Wandering Jews,' partly because they used to wander for their meetings from house to house, and partly because they claimed the right to wander from the subject of discussion of each meeting. Among these Wandering Jews were men who afterwards gained reputation in the outer and in the Jewish world, like Israel Abrahams, Asher Myers, editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, Lucien Wolf, and Israel Zangwill. Into this circle Schechter burst like an exploding bomb, and would bear down the often rationalist and cynical comments that flourished there with his mixture of enthusiasm and indignation."

Of the same period Mrs. Schechter, in her tribute to Joseph Jacobs, wrote: "He soon became one of the inner group of Schechter's Liberty Hall, the members of which dropped in almost daily at any old time, from early breakfast till midnight. The small group grew around Schechter larger and larger into 'The Wanderers,' finally developing into 'The Macca-bæans.'"

"We were all young and strong and keen, and every evening in our large and cozy study, around the huge log-fire, we read, and talked, and discussed every problem under the sun. There never were more jolly, sparkling, deeply earnest and spirited talks, and it is a pity that we were all so absorbed in living our lives that we failed to write down the best thoughts of those men of letters, who were at that time prodigal of their ideas, not yet hoarding them for copy. When Zangwill became too radical and Schechter stormy, and Lucien Wolf mysterious in diplomatic discussions, and Israel Abrahams, a born neutral,

would say pacifically: 'You are both right,' and Asher Myers, the late editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, and kindest of friends, decided with his invariable pronouncement: 'I think Schechter is right,' Joseph Jacobs, the most amiable of the group, would often clear the atmosphere with his original remarks and laughter."

To another must be left the preparation of the bibliography of Doctor Schechter. The earliest literary fruits of his stay in England were a review of Edersheim's *Life of Jesus, the Messiah*, published in the *Westminster Review*, and a small pamphlet of *Šawwaot* (Testaments), which he found in the British Museum, edited with an introduction in 1885, and dedicated to his parents. His first considerable publication, however, issued in 1887, was *Aboth di R. Nathan*, one of the so-called minor tractates, usually printed with the Babylonian Talmud, which is of high interest on account of its ethical contents, and was greatly in need of a critical edition. To fix this text, he collated all the manuscripts in which the tractate was either wholly or partly contained, and he printed in two opposite columns different recensions, one previously published, and the other existing only in manuscript. In the notes he pointed out the parallel passages in either recension. He supplied an introduction to explain the genesis of the tractate and its relation to contemporary Hebrew literature, and notes and appendices furnished the student with material for understanding the text. He further alludes in his introduction to the great task before the modern rabbinical scholar of introducing a little order into the existing chaos, to the enormous advantages he had in England through the priceless treasures of its libraries, and to the debt which he owed to Claude G. Montefiore, who for the first time gave his literary activity an

outlet, and he concludes with the sentence: "As a mark of my sincere gratitude for the good fortune which has befallen me—a fortune of which better and wiser men than I have been deprived—let this, my first large attempt in the field of Hebrew literature, be herewith dedicated to you."

He very rapidly acquired the English language, and undertook constant studies in the great treasure-houses of the British Museum and the Bodleian Library at Oxford, the Hebrew collections of the latter being then presided over by that distinguished bibliographer, Adolf Neubauer. Schechter at once undertook studies in the texts of the Midrash which resulted in the publication of the splendid edition of the Midrash ha-Gadol, forming a collection of ancient rabbinic homilies to the Pentateuch which he intended to edit for the first time from various Yemenite MSS. It is characteristic of the deliberation with which Doctor Schechter carried out his scholarly work that the only published volume, that on Genesis, did not appear until the year 1902. The publication of this volume has had great influence in reviving investigation in this most interesting department of Jewish literature.

About this time the concrete evidence of the revival of Jewish learning in England, which was so much hoped for, and from which so much was realized, was manifested by the publication of the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, edited by Israel Abrahams and Claude G. Montefiore, the first number of which was issued in October, 1888. This very first number contained an article by Doctor Schechter entitled "The Dogmas of Judaism," which was the beginning of that extraordinary series of essays which afterwards resulted in three volumes, "Studies in Judaism, First Series," "Studies in Judaism, Second Series," and in the later and even more



important work, "Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology," the beginning of the first attempt at a systematic presentation of the theology of the Rabbis. This essay and the many others that followed it gave evidence of his clearness of thought and his charm and beauty of expression, both distinguishing marks of the great scholar.

Few of the twenty volumes of the First Series of the *Jewish Quarterly Review* lacked one or more articles by Doctor Schechter, and it is pleasant to think that he who had contributed so much to the First Series was instrumental in aiding to establish the New Series of the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, published by the Dropsie College, and that even to the volume just completed he gave his guidance in the selection of the articles. And let me say here that in our intercourse connected with the *Quarterly* during the six years of the publication of the New Series, Doctor Schechter's voice was always in favor of a policy of generosity, whether to a dissenting or hostile opinion, or to the somewhat immature writings of younger men; he frequently said: "We must give the young men a chance."

The University of Cambridge, in spite of the fact that of the two great English Universities it was especially devoted to mathematics and the physical sciences, whereas Oxford was famed for classics and history, had had for a quarter of a century an instructor in Talmud and rabbinical literature in the person of Solomon Mayer Schiller-Szinessy, a native of Hungary, who published the first part of a catalogue of the Hebrew manuscripts in the Cambridge University Library, a critical edition of Kimhi's Commentary on the first book of Psalms, and other writings. Schiller-Szinessy died in March, 1890, and Schechter was appointed to the vacant lectureship, a post

which must have corresponded with his highest hopes and was a fitting tribute to the evidence of genius and scholarship that he had already given.

As a boy Doctor Schechter had seen in his Roumanian town the insults and oppression to which a Jew was subjected and the repression which he was obliged to exercise. He was taught that if an insult or even a stone were hurled at him he must not retort nor defend himself for fear that greater harm would come upon his people. He had looked to the freer states of Austria and Germany as places in which a Roumanian Jew would be liberated from persecution and from the narrowing effects which such persecutions had brought upon the Jewish community itself. But while for a time he was attracted by the liberalism of Germany and of the Jewish community of Berlin, he soon became convinced that this was superficial; that whereas the Jew was free politically, he was in an environment which was endeavoring to enslave him mentally and spiritually, in which the forces of philosophy, and history and theology and criticism were alike being used to establish the inferiority of the Jewish people, to minimize their history and to degrade their literature before the world. The greater freedom of England, the fact that the Universities were not part of the Governmental system, the nobility and wide influence of the Jewish community of Great Britain, all seemed to hold out to him the opportunity both for freedom and for work for which he passionately hoped.

His appointment at Cambridge was a most important step in the development of his career. Here he found a congenial set of friends who encouraged him and stimulated him and to whom in turn he was prodigal of his great gifts. In this circle are to be enumerated Sir James George Frazer, the author of the *Golden Bough*, Doctor Eiriker Magnussen, the great Ice-

landic scholar, W. D. Buckland, regius professor of law, Professor Alfred Haddon, the anthropologist, Professor Arthur S. Strong, librarian of the House of Lords, Sir Donald MacAlister, now principal of Glasgow University, and Rendel Harris, the distinguished New Testament scholar, then a Fellow of Clare College.

I do not recall nor can I find among my papers the occasion of my first correspondence with Doctor Schechter. It may possibly have begun through Rendel Harris, who had come from Cambridge to America, and was a mutual friend. At all events upon coming to London in November, 1890, I wrote to Cambridge asking for the privilege of an interview, received an invitation by telegram, and promptly repaired to Doctor Schechter's house, and thus began a friendship which endured to the end, and was one of the greatest privileges of my life. One or two of the men I have mentioned I distinctly remember meeting upon that occasion. In those days his appearance was entirely different from that which he presented upon settling in this country. Not quite forty years of age, his hair and beard were ruddy without any sign of that premature whiteness which afterwards became a crown of glory. He was erect, rather spare, and a vigorous walker.

His going to Cambridge was fortunate in many ways, and while it took him out of the great Jewish community of London, to their disadvantage, yet with the comparatively easy-going methods of an English University, which does not require many lectures from its staff, and has long vacations, he found it possible, without serious anxiety, to give a large part of his time to study and reading which intensified and ordered his knowledge of Jewish literature, and gave him a wide acquaintance with the literature and learning of all other civilized peoples.

That he was influencing other scholars in those days may be gleaned from Mr. Montefiore's acknowledgment in his Hibbert Lectures on the origin and growth of religion as illustrated by the religion of the ancient Hebrews: "To Mr. Schechter I owe more than I can adequately express here. My whole conception of the Law and of its place in Jewish religion and life is largely the fruit of his teaching and inspiration, while almost all the Rabbinic material upon which that conception rests was put before my notice and explained to me by him." Jewish literature for the last quarter of a century abounds in such acknowledgments, not to speak of the many scholars and students he aided, but to whom he denied the opportunity of such recognition.

His merits were speedily recognized by the authorities of the University of Cambridge. In 1892 the degree of Master of Arts *honoris causa* was conferred upon him by the University. He early formed a close companionship with Doctor Charles Taylor, the Master of St. John's College, who had long been engaged in Hebrew studies, and was one of the few Christian theologians who recognized the importance and the worth of post-biblical Jewish literature. As early as 1877 Doctor Taylor had published an edition of that famous work, *Pirke Abot* (the Sayings of the Fathers). A second edition appeared in 1897, in which he said of Schechter that it was to his "learning and acumen I am indebted for the suggestion of additions and improvements throughout the work." It was largely due to Doctor Taylor's generosity that Schechter was enabled to make the trip to Cairo which resulted in the transfer of the greater part of the treasures of the Genizah of the old synagogue of that city to the University of Cambridge. I am, however, anticipating.

In 1893, Doctor Schechter was awarded the Worth Studentship, a sort of traveling fellowship, for the purpose of going to Italy to examine the great Hebrew treasures in the libraries of that country. Of this opportunity he made good use in the texts which he afterwards published, and in numerous notes and collations of manuscripts, some of which are unpublished, but which, it is expected, will see the light of day through the labors of his disciples.

A number of friends in America had recognized the genius of Doctor Schechter, and had endeavored to bring about his accession to the Faculty of the then struggling Jewish Theological Seminary. This effort had the full approval of the late Doctor Sabato Morais, then president of the Seminary, and upon the death of Doctor Alexander Kohut, the professor of Talmud, the idea occurred that it would be very desirable if Doctor Schechter could be brought to America for the purpose of establishing a mutual acquaintanceship with a larger group in the hope that there would result some arrangement by which he might be induced to settle in the United States. In 1893 there became available the Deed of Trust executed by Hyman Gratz in favor of the Congregation Mikve Israel in Philadelphia, "for the establishment and support of a College for the education of Jews residing in the city and county of Philadelphia," and the first step taken to inaugurate the academic work of this Trust was an invitation to Doctor Schechter to come to America and deliver a course of lectures upon this foundation. The unofficial approach was apparently made by Doctor Solomon Solis Cohen, for in a letter dated Cambridge, June 14, 1894, Doctor Schechter wrote to him: "I think I could see my way to falling in with your convenient proposal; matters of this nature, as you say, are better discussed by word of mouth than by correspondence.

In answer to your three questions formally, therefore: 1. I should be able to accept your invitation without incurring the least risk of compromising my position in Cambridge. It occurs frequently that men from the University are invited for a course of lectures to America.

2. I thought it still premature to apply to the General Board of Studies for a grant of leave of absence on your private letter. That could not be done without enclosing a definite invitation and giving them a fixed date. But I have approached in an unofficial way the Master of our College, and he thinks that the Board will probably grant me leave of absence for a term which means three months.

3. I could best absent myself from Cambridge during the Lent Term (15th of December to the end of March) . . . . As to the subject of the lectures, I do not think it advisable to make the Talmud the exclusive topic of treatment. The poor Talmud has been so often tortured by lecturers and orators of both sides that the public must necessarily be suspicious of any undertaking of this kind. Besides, the genuine nature of the Talmud could after all not be shown without expounding to the hearers one tractate at least thoroughly and honestly. I would rather prefer to give eight lectures on Jewish Thought (post-biblical), dealing mainly with its most important theological manifestations. This would, of course, include the Talmud, and would bring the subject down to our present century. I shall in this way use some lectures I have given here, and write some new lectures for you. I hope to be able to make the subject interesting, both to scholars and to the public at large."

A few weeks after this was received I went to England for a visit, and took up in person the discussion referred to in the

letter to Doctor Cohen, and it must have resulted in a formal agreement, because, under date of December 29, 1894, Doctor Schechter wrote me to Washington as follows: "I have sent off a letter to you (to the address of the Mikve Israel Congregation) containing my formal answer to the invitation of the Gratz Trust Committee. I was as stiff as a Dayan, as one should be when writing to a real live Chairman. Here I want to be cordial and tell you how deeply grateful I feel toward you for your kind efforts in my behalf. What a joy in heaven there will be to see old friends again. . . . At present Neubauer from Oxford is staying with me, who occupies all my time, whilst next week I must go to London to prepare for my notes to the *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim*, which must at last be sent to the press." (Agadath Shir Hashirim, Cambridge, 1896, dedicated "To Dr. Moritz Steinschneider, The Nestor of Jewish Bibliography, in Commemoration of his Eightieth Birthday.")

"I have also to thank you most heartily," he continues, "for your religious museum lecture which is very interesting. Only such a museum could give us the proper history of the 'domestication of religious ideas,' but I should like also to see an old Jew exhibited there sitting on the floor in the middle of the night and reading *Tikkun Haṣot*, and crying bitterly over the *Goluth ha-Shechinah* (the exile of the Shechinah). This would be something which neither Wellhausen nor W. R. Smith could explain."

Schechter arrived in this country in February, 1895, and as I could not come from Washington to hear his opening lecture, he made report in the following characteristic note, dated at Philadelphia, 1303 Girard Avenue, February 12, 1895. He acknowledged the letter received on board the "Teutonic,"

described his delay of three days due to gales, and then added: "But all troubles are now over and I am here with S., whose house is a little paradise on earth. I wonder whether they have such nice libraries in the Gan Eden containing so little theology and so many good novels. I gave my first lecture yesterday. The hall was crowded, and I hope that at least a minyan understood my English, and that I shall be saved for the sake of the ten."

He returned to England in March, 1895, and from his steamship, the "Majestic," he wrote under date of March 28, in reply to a letter: "My zeal for democratic institutions has not cooled down. I still believe that you . . . are the greatest and the best of nations. Nor is your Judaism so bad as the English Episcopalians think, in spite of the little foxes who destroy the vineyards. . . . The sea is very rough, which interferes very greatly with my spelling and grammar. Have you read 'As Other Saw Him A. D. 54?' Do read it." (This refers to a book by Joseph Jacobs of which Doctor Schechter wrote an interesting review in the *Jewish Chronicle*.)

On the 13th of May, 1896, according to the statement of Doctor Charles Taylor in the preface to the edition of Ben Sira, published by the Cambridge University Press in 1899, Doctor Schechter observed at Cambridge in a bundle of fragments brought by Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson from Southern Palestine the time-worn leaf of a copy of the lost original Hebrew of Ben Sira's work. This book, also called Ecclesiasticus, one of the most elevating of the apocryphal literature, had been known for nearly a thousand years only in the Greek, although there was ample evidence that it had once existed in a Hebrew original. This subject had interested Doctor Schechter for some time, and in the third volume of the first



series of the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, in the number published July, 1891, he collected the quotations from Ecclesiasticus in rabbinic literature, which had been done before to some extent, but which he put together with full parallels and different readings derived from manuscripts and older editions. Thus his discovery was by no means a lucky accident, but, as is not infrequent among scientific men, was preceded by the most careful preparation. Doctor Schechter's first formal publication on the subject was in the *Expositor* for July, 1896, in an article covering only fifteen pages, though a notice of the discovery was published prior to this in the London *Athenæum* and the London *Academy*. Doctor Schechter at once recognized the capital importance of this recovery of a lost original, not only because it gave an additional text in classical Hebrew to our scanty collections, but because its far-reaching implications had to be reckoned with by the proponents of biblical criticism and students of Hebrew philology.

The actual discovery which made a world-wide sensation has been variously described. Professor Marx, to whose excellent biography, presented to the American Jewish Historical Society, I am greatly indebted, wrote as follows: "As Doctor Schechter himself told me, he once visited his friends, Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson, who had just returned from a trip in the East, and was shown some old Hebrew leaves which the learned ladies had acquired during the voyage. One of these leaves at once attracted his special attention, and suggested the idea that it was a piece of the original of Ben Sira, in which he had been especially interested for a long time, as shown by an article a few years before, in which he had collected all the Hebrew quotations of this book occurring in Jewish literature. But when he wanted to test this idea he had to go home, for the

ladies, as strict Presbyterians, did not have a copy of the Apocrypha in their house."

Another description of this event was brought to my attention by Professor Margolis. An article was published in the Transactions of the International Scientific Congress of Catholics held at Freiburg in Switzerland, written by Doctor S. Minocchi of Florence, on the discovery of the original Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus. It contains an abstract of the following very interesting private letter written by Mrs. Lewis from Marseilles on the eighth of April, 1897, recording the exact facts of the identification of the first fragment of Ecclesiasticus as a result of her request to Doctor Schechter to examine some Hebrew fragments that she had purchased in Palestine, but which had probably originated in Egypt. "I happened," wrote Mrs. Lewis, "to meet him in the street, and asked him to do so the same day. In less than an hour I returned home. Mr. Schechter had already finished his examination. He held up a yellow leaf containing part of the Jerusalem Talmud, and said it was rather important. Then he held up a paper leaf and said: 'This seems interesting, may I take it to the University Library and verify it?' I said: 'Certainly.' 'May I publish it?' I said: 'Mrs. Gibson and I will be only too happy if you find it worth publishing.' An hour later we got a telegram saying: 'Your paper leaf is most valuable; please come to my house this afternoon.' And ten minutes later the postman delivered a letter from Mr. Schechter, written in a state of the wildest excitement, and telling us that it was a bit of the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus. We drove to Mr. Schechter's house that afternoon, and the same evening I wrote to the two literary papers, the *Academy* and the *Athenæum*, describing the fragments."

The only evidence that I can find in my correspondence of this discovery are postal cards written in the month of June, 1896, making requests for some books on Sirach, which Doctor Schechter apparently could not procure in England.

It was not until 1899, as noted above, that Doctor Schechter, with Doctor Taylor, published a formal edition of the Wisdom of Ben Sira from manuscripts received from the Cairo Genizah, which will be referred to later on.

Doctor Taylor wrote in the preface: "Ben Sira's book is of unique interest to the scholar and the theologian as a Hebrew work of nearly known date, which forms a link between the Old Testament and the rabbinic writings. The first step to its right appreciation is to note its discursive use of the ancient Scriptures, and the author's free way of adapting their thoughts and phrases to his purposes."

In 1904, in a series of public lectures, afterwards printed under the title "A glimpse of the social life of the Jews in the age of Jesus, the son of Sira," as well as in a previous lecture on the study of the Bible, Doctor Schechter emphasized the fact that the discovery of this book tended to disprove many of the theories which had been advanced concerning the lateness of various works included in the biblical canon.

Although the fragment of Ecclesiasticus was purchased by Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson in Palestine, there seemed to be little doubt that its origin was Egypt. For 150 years the Genizah at Cairo had been referred to in literature. The practice of burying manuscripts and books partially injured is a very old one. It existed among old synagogues in the Orient, and is practiced there and even in the Occident to this very day. The subject had long attracted Doctor Schechter's attention, and he had collected references to it in the works of

travelers as well as in the Responsa of the Rabbis. During my own visit to Cairo in March and April, 1891, I secured some fifty fragments of Hebrew and Arabic manuscripts from a dealer in antiquities, the origin of which was, of course, not then known to me. On my way back to America I paid a visit to England, and showed these to Doctor Schechter early in January, 1892, as well as to Doctor Neubauer and others. It may be said in passing that even this small collection has yielded some interesting finds, the most important being the recovery of a portion of the lost Book of Precepts of Ḥefes b. Yaśliah, an author of the tenth century, edited by Doctor B. Halper, a fragment of Sa'adya's *Sefer ha-Galui*, edited by Professor Henry Malter, and a poem by Elhanan b. Shemarya, edited by Professor Israel Davidson.

Mr. Elkan Adler of London, on a visit to Cairo in 1888, had obtained some Hebrew fragments; Professor Sayce had others, and for two or three years various fragments, all from Cairo, indicating a common source, filtered into the great libraries of England and even to America. It was the literary evidence of the existence of this Genizah and the results of its pilferings by dealers which convinced Doctor Schechter that the time had come to make the attempt to save this great collection from dispersion all over the world, and this conviction was strengthened by the identification of the fragment of Sirach already alluded to. The unearthing of the Genizah was the event of Doctor Schechter's career, more dramatic even than the discovery of the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus. But it was not due to any exploitation upon his part that this created a world sensation among scholars and among all intelligent men, and he rather resented having it alluded to as a discovery, in which word he thought something of chance or accident was involved. Before

he went to Cairo he was unerringly sure that great treasures were there, though, of course, he could not divine their exact nature. In his lectures on the Genizah, delivered before the Dropsie College, and as yet unpublished, he used the following words: "I should like at once to correct a mistake with which I often meet in books and articles, in which I am described as the discoverer of the Genizah. This is not correct. The Genizah practically discovered itself."

"The conviction of the importance of the Cairo Genizah," he writes, "had grown upon me as I examined the various manuscripts which had found their way from it into English private and public libraries, and which had already led to important discoveries. I therefore determined to make a pilgrimage to the shores whence they had come. My plan recommended itself to the authorities of the University of Cambridge, and found warm supporters in Professor Sidgwick, Doctor Donald MacAlister, and especially Doctor Taylor, the Master of St. John's College. To the enlightened generosity of this great student and patron of Hebrew literature it is due that my pilgrimage became a regular pleasure trip to Egypt, and extended into the Holy Land."

The visit to Cairo and the work in the Genizah were the turning-points in Doctor Schechter's personal and scientific career. The work underground in sorting thousands, possibly as many as one hundred thousand fragments, of manuscripts amidst the accumulated dust and dirt of centuries impaired his health to such an extent that he began to pass almost from the appearance of a young man to a man of considerable age, which those who did not know his comparative youth were accustomed to ascribe to him. He gave an account of the external part of his work in Cairo and also a rough survey of the

contents of the Genizah in two articles entitled "A Hoard of Hebrew Manuscripts," originally published in the *London Times* and reprinted in his "Studies in Judaism, Second Series." Those who saw him seated in the great basement room of the Cambridge Library, with the boxes upon boxes of priceless treasures about him, endeavoring to sift out the more valuable and place them in some sort of order, can realize the force of his words written in the summer of 1897: "Looking over this enormous mass of fragments about me, in the sifting and examination of which I am now occupied, I cannot overcome a sad feeling stealing over me, that I shall hardly be worthy to see the results which the Genizah would add to our knowledge of Jews and Judaism. This work is not for one man and not for one generation. It will occupy many a specialist, and much longer than a lifetime. However, to use an old adage, 'It is not thy duty to complete the work, but neither art thou free to desist from it.'" This great collection was presented to the University of Cambridge jointly by Doctor Schechter and by Doctor Taylor, and to its elucidation practically all of Doctor Schechter's scholarly activity was henceforth dedicated.

Whilst this fact had a profound influence on Doctor Schechter's career, it was of even greater significance for the development of Jewish literature, because had this opportunity not been vouchsafed to him he would have undoubtedly devoted himself to other subjects in which his scholarly activities were sorely needed. In his generation he was the Jewish scholar best fitted to make contributions to Jewish biography and history. Essays like those on Krochmal, Nachmanides, and the Gaon of Wilna, and even more important, the essay on Safed in the 16th century, indicate that he was a master in portray-



SCHECHTER-TAYLOR CAIRO COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND.





ing the life either of a great man or of the people and in providing the proper background and setting for such a picture. His talents, if devoted to this subject alone, would have produced a most remarkable history of the Jewish people. As yet, the successor to Graetz has not been found.

The other department of Jewish literature which would have been greatly enhanced was that of Jewish theology, or, as he preferred to call it, Rabbinic theology, although this phase connoted to him nothing separate from Judaism. Rabbinism in his opinion was never a movement in Judaism, but represented the steady, orderly development of the main stream. All that went away from it were movements and currents; this was the principal thing. For his work entitled "Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology," dedicated to Louis Marshall, which appeared in book form only in 1909, although based upon essays which began to appear in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* as early as 1894, he made a most careful study of general theology, and invented new categories, since he was convinced that Judaism could not be exactly fitted into the rubrics of other religions. "The task I set myself," he said, "was to give a presentation of Rabbinic opinion on a number of theological topics as offered by the Rabbinic literature, and forming an integral part of the religious consciousness of the bulk of the nation or 'Catholic Israel.'" And very characteristic of the intellectual humility of this great scholar, as of all great men, is the opening paragraph of his introductory chapter to this work which may be commended to generations of students: "My object in choosing the title 'Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology' is to indicate that from the following chapters there must not be expected either finality or completeness. Nor will there be made any attempt in the following pages at that precise and

systematic treatment which we are rightly accustomed to claim in other fields of scientific inquiry. I have often marvelled at the certainty and confidence with which Jewish legalism, Jewish transcendentalism, Jewish self-righteousness, are delineated in our theological manuals and histories of religion; but I have never been able to emulate either quality. I have rather found, when approaching the subject a little closer, that the peculiar mode of old Jewish thought, as well as the unsatisfactory state of the documents in which this thought is preserved, 'are against the certain,' and urge upon the student caution and sobriety."

In November, 1915, only a few weeks before his lamented death, he was talking over what he proposed to do after he might be able to lay down his administrative burdens, and the two things that he had particularly in mind were the writing of a second volume on Rabbinic Theology and a work showing the Jewish conception of charity. He frequently regretted the absence of an adequate presentation of the wonderful wealth of material in the Bible, and in the whole of post-biblical Jewish literature, of the attitude of a Jew to his fellow-man less fortunate than himself, and it was one of his most cherished aspirations to be able to supply this want. He had also during his travels in Italy made collections for the writing of a history of the biblical Canon, but this work, I think, he was prepared to turn over to another, when he found a man in whose scholarship and sympathy he had confidence.

However, the Genizah did come from Egypt to England, and with it there was forced upon Schechter the labor that he did not shirk, and for which he had few helpers.

That he was busy in 1898 with the Genizah work may be gleaned from a letter of July 12, 1898, in which he wrote: "I

sent you with the last mail a photograph of the *Aron Kodesh* of the Cairo synagogue in which the Genizah is placed. The Orientals have no idea of repair and preservation, and thus the *Aron* is modern." It may be said in passing that the original of the *Aron Kodesh*, or the Holy Ark, of the Cairo synagogue was presented by the authorities to Doctor Schechter personally, who brought it to America, and in turn presented it to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, in whose synagogue it is now placed. It is figured and described in the Biennial Report of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1902-4, published in 1906, and is probably the oldest piece of ecclesiastical furniture in the United States. A part of the inscription was wanting, and by one of those romances of archæology, Professor Marx recently discovered, through the last issued section of the Catalogue of Hebrew and Samaritan manuscripts in the British Museum, a piece of board containing the first half of a two-line inscription which forms the missing part of the inscription on this Ark.

In the midst of our Spanish-American War Schechter wrote: "I wish you all success in your present war. But I can get as little enthusiastic over pan-Saxonism as over pan-Germanism, etc. The over-emphasis of the racial principle will be the destruction of our people. They will as little forgive us our Semitic origin as they did in the Middle Ages our denial of the son. We shall only have peace when the sentiments expressed in the morning service of Rosh ha-Shanah have become a complete reality, and my belief is strong that the distant future will be for us if we remain ourselves. I am still very busy with the Genizah, particularly with the Sirach finds. I have rewritten the greatest part of the notes, but I am very anxious to write a good introduction."

Our correspondence was interrupted then, because early in July, 1898, I went to England, and spent four months there, a good deal of it in Doctor Schechter's company in Cambridge and in Ramsgate, where we worshipped together in the little synagogue of the Montefiore family, at the invitation of the distinguished Master of East Cliff Lodge, Sir Joseph Sebag-Montefiore. In October of that year I returned from England, and must have informed Doctor Schechter of my arrival home, for under date of November 24, 1898, he writes and thanks me for a letter, and then continues: "The degree conferred to-day on Lord Kitchener gives us a little Yom Tob (holiday). I also went to the Senate in all my glory of red robes. I am still writing the introduction to Sirach, which piece of work will, I think, rejoice your heart. Please God I hope to finish it by next week. The chief thing is to find out how and what portions of the Bible he used, which gave me an enormous piece of work. In fact, I went through all the canonical writers to locate all the references."

Meanwhile more or less animated correspondence was kept up between members of the Board of Trustees of the Seminary and Doctor Schechter, with a view to his coming to America; but other opportunities arose in England. On December 23, 1898, he wrote: "You probably read in the *Jewish Chronicle* of my appointment to the London Professorship. . . . I have given up thinking of the New York Seminary, where, it seems, all things go slowly. They want me perhaps even more than I want them. When you give the matter your blessing I will answer Amen."

In the intervening years he continued to give himself entirely to work on the Genizah manuscripts, and there resulted the publication of several very important books. The first of

these, the text of the Wisdom of Ben Sira, has already been mentioned. Next in order there came his *Saadyana*, printed in 1903, being fragments of the writings of the great Gaon Saadya and others, mostly derived from the Taylor-Schechter collection, with the exception of a few fragments in the possession of Judge Sulzberger of Philadelphia, and Elkan N. Adler of London. These documents are of the greatest value for Jewish history, and have stimulated other scholars in the production of remarkable contributions to the obscure history of the Gaonate. The latest and possibly the most important of all of Doctor Schechter's publications issued as a result of these discoveries were the Documents of Jewish Sectaries, in two volumes, which he dedicated to Jacob H. Schiff; the first volume, the Fragments of a Zadokite Work, he ascribed to the second century, while the other was The Fragments of the Book of the Commandments by Anan, the founder of the Karaite Sect.

The Zadokite work has been followed by a trail of admiration, criticism, and discussion. I am in position to say that in spite of the criticism, Doctor Schechter maintained his view as to the antiquity of this sect. He was collecting all the criticisms which appeared—some at great length and in serial form—and had decided to make no further comment until he could review the entire discussion. He went about this edition with the greatest caution, as was his custom, and wrote his introduction, and stated his theory with the full realization of the fact that it was an hypothesis and that his conclusions might be attacked, but he deemed it cowardly to simply issue a text with philological notes and not be courageous enough to endeavor to present it in its proper historical and literary setting.

Not very long after the publication of this important work, on May 18, 1911, President Lowell wrote to Doctor Schechter: "Harvard University would like to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Letters on Commencement next, June 28, if you can be present at that time to receive it." He was very much pleased with this distinction, which he felt to be one extended not only to him personally but to the Seminary and to the community, and the day after the Commencement he wrote from the train on his return to Boston: "It was a glorious day. Everybody was kind, especially Moore [Professor George F. Moore], who was my sponsor. . . . The papers say that I am the first Jew to receive honors from Harvard, which I hardly believe."

In July of 1899 he had met Doctor Solomon Solis Cohen in Amsterdam, where the question of his coming to America was again discussed, and he wrote to me on January 1, 1900, his views as they had then matured, first stating what his arrangements were in England, and adding: "America has thus only *ideal* attractions to me, offering as it does a larger field of activity which may become a source of blessing to future generations. I also feel that I shall be more happy living among Jews. I want my synagogue and my proper Yomim Tobim among my people. There is also the question of the children being brought up among Jews, which is the only guarantee for the acquiring of a real heartfelt Judaism. I think we have once talked over all those points. This is what attracts me to your continent, but I cannot move from here before I see my future safe in America. I am prepared to give to the Seminary all my faculties and energies, even my very life." He then asked me to keep an eye for reviews of his Sirach publication and other articles that he had written, and added: "I

do not care for praise. All that I am anxious for is that my results bearing on Bible criticism should become known in wider circles," so that people might learn that Holy Writ according to the critics was not itself above criticism. He then goes on: "I am now occupied with preparing the author's introduction to the Midrash ha-Gadol, which I had to copy from another manuscript, my copy being defective at the beginning," and then follows this comment on the Boer War then raging, which he considered very unrighteous: "We are now blessed with any amount of yellow papers, yellow sermons, yellow prayers (written in bad grammar) calling upon their yellow god to bless their arms to the glory of his holy name and the Anglo-Saxon race. The pro-Boer party, on the other hand, quotes aptly Ezekiel 35.10 (look it up). You know I hate imperialism of all kinds and of all ages."

On April 22, 1900, he wrote in acknowledgment of some publications for his Sirach collections: "The latter complete my Sirach collections, already filling three volumes. At present I am chiefly busy with the Book of Jubilees, having discovered a fragment which I believe will at last solve this much discussed problem." This fragment turned out to be part of the Zadokite work described above.

In November, 1900, he wrote, reproaching me for my silence, in these words: "Since months and months and months no lines from you. Cheyne has in the meantime discovered an eighth Isaiah."

Doctor Schechter's life in England was a very happy one. He married there, and there his children were born. He helped to make something of a Jewish center in Cambridge. The Jewish students organized a synagogue which they themselves conducted with zeal and devotion. The Cambridge Society for

Jewish Studies, named after him before his departure from England, continues to exist. The great charm that he exercised over the learned authorities of Cambridge was evidenced by the beautiful parchments and other presentations that were made to him when he came to America. A striking example of the affection in which he was held is contained in a private letter of Sir James G. Frazer, which I am taking the liberty of quoting from the article of Professor Marx :

“In him we have lost one of our truest friends and one of the finest and most remarkable men we have ever known. It would be difficult to say whether he was more admirable for the brilliance of his intellect and the readiness of his wit, or for the warmth of his affection and the generosity and nobility of his character, but I think it was the latter qualities even more than his genius which endeared him to his friends. It was a wonderful combination of intellectual and moral excellence, and the longer and the more intimately one knew him the more deeply did one feel the impression of his greatness and goodness. I reckon it among the good fortunes of my life to have had the privilege and honor of his friendship, and I am sure that very many who knew him must feel as I do. His memory—the memory of his intellectual honesty, his generous enthusiasm for everything that was noble and beautiful, and his unmeasured contempt for everything that was base and ignoble—the memory of this will abide with us and be an inspiration to us to the end of our lives.”

To the Jewish community of England, a conservative body, and in those days not readily yielding to the influence of a foreigner, he commenced to have more and more of a real meaning. He addressed to them in 1901 a series of Epistles, originally published in the *Jewish Chronicle* and reprinted



in pamphlet form, which attracted the attention of Jews not only there but possibly even more in America. His attack upon the occidentalization of the Jewish religion, while it again aroused the conscience, sank deep into the minds of many thinking Jews the world over, even of those who were not in agreement with his theological views. These epistles and the stray hints in the letters from which I have quoted above explain why it was that Doctor Schechter was willing to come to America. As he said, his removal was not based upon any material advantage to himself. Indeed, comparatively speaking, there could have been none. There had been added to his readership at Cambridge a curatorship in the University library, a professorship in London, an examinership in Manchester, and I believe that a fellowship in one of the colleges was imminent. But what moved Doctor Schechter most to leave England was the fact that nearly all of his disciples at the University of Cambridge were non-Jews, and that while he recognized the usefulness of spreading a knowledge of Jewish literature among Christian theologians, he still had a very strong and natural desire to rear up a school of Jewish students who might properly carry on the traditions of Jewish learning. It was for this reason that he readily accepted the invitation extended to him to deliver a course of lectures on the Aspects of Rabbinic Theology before the Gratz College in Philadelphia in 1895, and that later on he was prepared to accept the new duty of President of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America when it was tendered to him in 1901.

On September 10 of that year he wrote me informally expressing his satisfaction that matters had been finally arranged, so that he could see his way to accepting the invitation to America. He asked for sufficient time to give notice to the

various boards of both Universities, of Cambridge and London, as well as to prepare his Genizah work in such a way that he could continue its editing in America.

On October 24, 1901, he writes: "I am now waiting with impatience for the days when we shall be colleagues. . . . Have I told you that among other surprises that I still have for the world is a fragment of Anan's work, the founder of the Karaite Sect?"

On October 31, 1901, he wrote with regard to what he called the crusade against Jewish learning, which was then being taken up by the American Jewish press, and added: "Something should be done to show people that ignorance is not the best accomplishment for a Jewish Minister."

The negotiations had been carried on by Judge Sulzberger, and very shortly they must have reached a definite conclusion, for on November 24, 1901, Judge Sulzberger telegraphed me to Washington the very important message: "Schechter accepts Presidency," and on December 24, Doctor Schechter wrote: "I have given to-day notice to all the institutions with which I am officially connected to take effect at the end of the Lent term, March 15."

There were various causes, apart from the call to a new post, which finally induced Doctor Schechter to come to America. When he first went to England he had acquired a real liking and respect for the late Chief Rabbi, Doctor Hermann Adler, which I know was reciprocated, because when Doctor Jacobs came to America Doctor Adler wrote me that, though we were to get Jacobs, he thought that he had succeeded in persuading Schechter to stay, and just before leaving England Schechter wrote there are "certain people determined to attack Doctor Adler, but I think that he is right. He has faults, but on the

whole he is the real Ray and has the best traditions of the office." He had not, however, found England as free as he thought, and the Boer War, which he considered unrighteous, had accentuated a feeling which he entertained against the ruling classes. In spite of the greatest religious toleration, the existence of an established church with its influence on the University seemed to him a cramping of the free spirit. The definite division into classes, of royalty, nobility, and the common people, while gradually coming to mean less and less, was nevertheless artificial, and he felt it to be out of consonance with the spirit of true freedom. On the other hand, his extensive reading of American literature had given him a sincere admiration for this country. Lincoln he revered as one of the greatest men of all times, and his remarkable essay on Lincoln indicates how carefully and how deeply he studied the character of that great American. His study of the literature of the Civil War was as far-reaching and as accurate as that of his researches in any department in his own profession. He followed the military narratives as carefully as the political histories, and every biography and every memoir that he could secure he read. Though his partiality was clearly for the North, and he believed the abolition of slavery to be one of the great triumphs of modern times, he had the deepest sympathy for the suffering of the South, and his military heroes of the Civil War were Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson rather than any northern commander.

Covering the years of his life in America there are fewer letters which illumine his ideas, as frequent contact rendered these unnecessary, and his correspondence was restricted to matters of business. Like many another, whilst some of the dreams which he brought to America became realities, in others

he was doomed to disappointment. His last published volume, *Seminary Addresses and Other Papers*, which appeared in September, 1915, indicates in a very fair way his relationship to the upbuilding of this distinguished institution of learning and the real understanding which he had of the religious needs of the Jewish community of America, as well as his opinions concerning the great movements which affected Jewry the world over.

His first formal address in America was entitled "The Emancipation of Jewish Science," in which he pleaded for a study of the Bible by Jews. He pointed out that the Bible was not discovered by Cheyne and Wellhausen and that the opinions of Rashi, Ibn Ezra and Samuel b. Meir often appeared in commentaries under the name of Dillmann, Delitzsch, and Ewald; that we were not to be satisfied with the recovery of the Bible alone, but must turn our attention to the large field of post-biblical history and literature, and so it appears that in this first public utterance on American soil, given on May 29, 1902, he outlined those great projects, a commentary on the Bible and the series of Jewish Classics, which are to become realities in the near future. It was to the Seminary itself, however, that he completely gave himself up, and he did succeed in creating a great school. Under his guidance there was assembled a faculty of men of learning who have trained a body of a hundred students, who are now in various pulpits manfully doing the work of Judaism throughout the length and breadth of this land, and have even penetrated into the British dominions. The teachers that he gathered about him, inspired by his example, have made notable contributions to Jewish literature, and some of them have taken an important share in the upbuilding of our Jewish communal institutions. Under his sympathetic

guidance and the able administration of Professor Marx there grew up the most notable Hebrew library of this continent and one of the three or four greatest collections in the world, this latter fact being the more remarkable since the European collections have had centuries in which to develop, while the Seminary library in its present grandeur is less than fifteen years old. Other plans, too, for the promotion of Jewish learning Schechter had in mind. Of the Dropsie College he early became a Governor, and made most helpful suggestions toward its organization. A few months after Mr. Dropsie's death he conceived the idea of some form of consolidation of the Seminary with this new foundation, which included a great center for Jewish science which Judaism still wants. "It is a great opportunity," he wrote, "which must not be allowed to escape us. I am even dreaming of a Jewish academy with regular academicians which, by reason of its authority for scientific merit, should give Jewish opinion weight and importance in all matters relating to Hebrew learning."

At the dedication of the building of the Dropsie College he laid a great deal of stress upon the fact that we had an institution of Jewish learning with which should always be connected original investigation and research. "Thank God," he declared, "we are beginning to be unpractical"; that whereas most men were engaged in *doing* things, there would at least be a few who would *think* things, which he declared to be the mission of universities and colleges. While on this occasion he made a plea for impartiality in science, he declared: "I am grateful to God that I have still some bias in favor of Judaism . . . the boast of non-sectarianism in matters of religion does not impress me. In most cases the man who claims this gift means nothing else but that he forms a sect for himself." He

was especially happy and magnetic on this particular evening, and I recall that the day after the Provost of the University of Pennsylvania, Doctor Edgar F. Smith, wrote me among other things: "I want to thank you for the opportunity to come to Dropsie College. I was delighted with your grand old man from New York. It was a real treat to see and hear him." And when I sent this letter to Doctor Schechter he replied: "I hardly need tell you how pleased I was with the letter of your Provost and his kind words about me. Nor need I say how glad I was to be with you on the great occasion and to speak a few words. I tried to do my best as Governor and representative of the Seminary, but especially to please you."

Although he had a very strong predilection for Philadelphia, where he had formed his early friendships, and had at one time preferred that the Seminary should be in that city, he began more and more to be convinced of the importance of the establishment of a seat of learning in New York. I had submitted to him for his criticism in 1909 a paper, the purport of which I have entirely forgotten; but he wrote on April 30 of that year: "Another point which should perhaps be a little more emphasized is also Dr. Morais's merit and foresight in establishing the College in New York. You speak of it in several places, but the fact of New York becoming with every day more and more the center of American thought in literature, poetry, etc., is not sufficiently pointed out. What I mean to say is that to a certain extent the spiritual hegemony of Boston and other places is being transferred to New York. Further, it would also be well to dwell a little on the higher learning which is cultivated also in other branches, though only a little of it comes down and becomes directly useful for the public at large. For instance, my druggist is personally

more useful to me than a Virchow and other famous teachers in medicine, whose names are household words in the scientific world. But it is in the end these great men who dominate the faculties and from whose teachings we benefit, though in indirect ways. . . . The late Mr. Gladstone was in the habit of calling Oxford and Cambridge 'the eyes of England,' though they are, as you know, the most conservative places, dominated by the most unpractical people, living only in ideas."

Having secured and co-ordinated a strong faculty, developed a great library, and brought about a real spirit of zeal and enthusiasm among the students, having raised the Seminary to the plane of a post-graduate professional school, he was just about preparing to take the step of improving the method of teaching through the introduction of the tutorial system, thus giving to each student the specialization needed in view of the totally different character and previous training of the students of the Seminary. It is earnestly to be hoped that this plan may be carried out in the near future. But he was not content with having established the seat of learning, and so in accordance with the spirit of his remark about Virchow and the druggist he made provision to carry the fruits of Jewish learning, as expressed in traditional Judaism, to the people at large. It was with this in view that he created the United Synagogue of America, a Union for Promoting Traditional Judaism. He had discussed this with his friends for a long time, and some of them, I among the number, had doubts as to the wisdom or feasibility of the undertaking. When in 1909 I finally wrote him of my agreement with his views, he replied, referring to the proposed organization: "This will be the greatest bequest that I shall leave to American Israel." The United Synagogue, he declared, had been called into life

without any purpose of creating a new division. "Life is too short for feuds, and the task before us is so great and so manifold that we must spare all our faculties and save all our strength for the work of a positive nature. . . . Indeed, what we intend to accomplish is not to create a new party, but to consolidate an old one, which has always existed in this country, but was never conscious of its own strength, nor perhaps realized the need of organization. I refer to the large number of Jews who, thoroughly American in habits of life and mode of thinking and, in many cases, imbued with the best culture of the day, have always maintained conservative principles and remained aloof from the Reform movement which swept over the country. They are sometimes stigmatized as the Neo-Orthodox. This is not correct. Their Orthodoxy is not new. It is as old as the hills, and the taunt 'new' can only be accounted for by the ignorance of those who took it into their heads that an observant Jew, who has taken a degree in a college, is a new phenomenon representing a mere paradox. A better knowledge of Jewish history would have taught them that culture combined with religion was the rule with the Jew; culture without religion was the exception. There were cases, of course, of religion without culture, but these were to be found only in countries in which culture, such as it was, was confined to a small official class, consisting largely of clerics or priests, but in which the population at large had no share, whether Jewish or Christian. The 'New' Orthodoxy, therefore, represents very little that is new. It was the normal state of the Jew in Spain; it was the normal state of the Jew in Italy; it was the normal state of the Jew in England and in Holland; it was the normal state of the Jew even in Germany, after the first calming down of the deluge, of the rationalism



that came in the wake of the French Revolution, which swept over the country, and the traces of which are more discernible on the shores of the North Atlantic than on the banks of the Rhine. The frame of mind which insists upon the unbridgeable chasm between the 'Intelligentia' and devotion and loyalty to the religion of the fathers is, at present, limited to the countries in the Near East just emerging from a state of barbarism, as is the case with Russia . . . there were always Jews who were not carried away by big words. They knew well that a label meant nothing. You may describe yourself a Progressive and find, after a careful analysis, that you are woefully backward both in your philosophy and in your conception of history. You may call yourself a Liberal and be as narrow in your sympathies and as limited in the sphere of your thought as your worst opponent. You may stigmatize Orthodox Judaism as un-American, and suddenly discover that real Americanism meant reverence for the Bible as the word of God, obedience to the authority of the Scriptures, which lay at the foundation of this country, and that love for institutions and memories of the past is a particular feature with the best American minds."

To the Jewish Publication Society of America he gave his powerful support from the very beginning. Indeed he had evinced his interest before he came to America. He sat on its Publication Committee and was one of the Board of Editors of the Bible Translation; the latter piece of work he did with great unwillingness and simply from a sense of loyalty to the Society. He often said that for a man of his age and duties thirty days in the year for meetings for a period of seven years was too large a slice out of his life. Had he been spared he would undoubtedly have been the master mind in planning the

commentary on the Bible, a project which he long had at heart. He was the Chairman of the Committee on the Series of Jewish Classics to be published by the Society, and in this work he had genuine pleasure, and it should be recorded that under his guidance the general outlines of the plan were agreed upon, and the very last days of his life were spent in their execution.

While he was devoted to matters of Jewish learning, education, and religion, he took no active part in those general questions which have stirred the Jews of America, especially since the beginning of the Russian persecutions. The agitation with reference to the abrogation of the treaty with Russia and its importance from the point of view of American citizenship deeply moved him and caused him to write a letter on the subject to one of the New York newspapers. And after the House of Representatives had approved the resolution to abrogate the treaty, he wrote: "Let me congratulate you most heartily on your great success and your contribution to this success. It is the greatest deed known to me in the annals of Jewish history of this century, and its significance probably goes much deeper than the public at large is able to see. It means the beginning of the redemption of Russian Jewry, which, I still hope to God, I may be worthy of seeing. But I am grateful for having seen the beginning."

From the important movement known as Zionism for a time he held aloof. The original plan of a secular Jewish state propounded by Doctor Herzl did not attract him. He was interested in Jews mainly because of Judaism, and like every good Jew longed and prayed for the restoration of Palestine and the coming of the Messiah. The presence among the leaders of Zionism of so many who had shown no particular allegiance to our religion likewise chilled his ardor. But when

there was a new alignment, and the Zionist movement was being attacked by some of its former friends and leaders who launched the Territorialist movement, which he considered purely material and a direct blow to Jewish aspirations, he boldly and unhesitatingly in 1906 gave his allegiance to the cause, and became one of its most capable and thoughtful advocates. He never subscribed to the most recent development of this movement in its nationalistic form, and his last writing on the subject, in the preface to the volume published in 1915, undoubtedly expressed his mature and final thought:

“Speaking for myself, Zionism was, and still is, the most cherished dream I was worthy of having. It was beautiful to behold the rise of this mighty bulwark against the incessantly assailing forces of assimilation, which became the more dangerous, as we have now among us a party permeated by Christianizing tendencies, the prominent leaders of which are even clamoring for a recognition of Paul, the apostle to the heathen—not to the Jews. These tendencies which, it must be said in justice, would have been strenuously opposed by the founders of the Reform school, are now thrust upon us on every occasion, and Heaven knows where they might have landed us but for the Zionist movement which again brought forth the national aspect as a factor in Jewish thought.

But this dream is not without its nightmares. For in their struggle to revive national sentiment, some of the Zionist spokesmen, calling themselves by preference Nationalists, manifested such a strong tendency to detach the movement from all religion as can only end in spiritual disaster. There is such a thing as the assimilation of Judaism even as there is such a thing as the assimilation of the Jew, and the former is bound to happen when religion is looked upon as a negligible

quantity. When Judaism is once assimilated the Jew will surely follow in its wake, and Jew and Judaism will perish together. All this is a consequence of preaching an aspect of nationalism more in harmony with Roman and similar modern models than with Jewish ideas and ideals. However, nightmares are fleeting and evanescent—the vision as a whole still remains glorious. The aberrations will, let us hope, be swept away quickly enough, as soon as their destructive nature is realized by the majority of the Zionists whose central ideas should and will remain God and His people, Israel.”

The milestones of his work in America can best be found in this last published work which appeared in September, 1915. Upon his arrival he saw the vision of creating a theological center which should be all things to all men, reconciling all parties and appealing to all sections of the community. That he did appeal to all sections of the community there is no doubt, but it was not long before he saw that the reconciliation of all parties was not possible in the immediate future. But he nevertheless did his best to sound the conciliatory note, and in the preface to this last book he writes: “Standing, as the seminary does, for the healthy development of traditional Judaism in the midst of many movements and vagaries, none of which are without excesses and against which we are constantly struggling, it was not possible that the controversial feature should be entirely eliminated from the volume. Yet it will be found that the ultimate goal at which we are aiming is union and peace in American Israel; the union of which I am thinking is not one of mere organization . . . the union we are in need of is one on principle and the recognition of vital facts decisive in our past and indispensable for our safety in the future, by which alone Israel can hope for a name and remainder upon the earth.”

I have tried faintly to portray an outline sketch of a man who was unique in his generation, a giant of intellect and learning in the world of scholarship at large, and who was in all probability the most important Jew of his time. But his genius, his scholarship, his leadership, the contributions that he made to every department of Jewish learning, the glory that he reflected upon the Jewish name are but a small portion of the picture of this noble and good man. He had sagacity, insight, and what I would call Jewish statesmanship in its highest form. While every fiber of his being was consecrated to Judaism, he was a citizen of the world, and no man could have taken a deeper interest in the great currents which move humanity, nor would there be found any who could interpret them more clearly than he. He was simple, tender, and considerate; he respected age and position, but even more, honesty and worth. He loved children, and counted hosts of little ones among his friends. He was a deeply religious man, religious not only in the outward sense, but all his acts in life were conditioned by his belief and trust in God, and his belief in God's goodness was so great that even under circumstances which would have depressed most men, he was confident and happy. And above all the material things that this world could bring him, all the scholarly success that he had, and all the honors that were bestowed upon him, he cherished love for his family and affection for his friends.

While I exult in the man, I mourn and lament the friend whom I loved. "There is no exchange for a faithful friend."











